

Statement on Representative Daniel D. Boren's Decision Not To Seek Reelection

June 7, 2011

I want to thank Representative Boren for his years of service representing the people of Oklahoma's Second District in the United States Congress. Over the course of his career, both in Washington and in the Oklahoma Legislature, Dan has exemplified a commitment to

creating jobs and economic opportunity for his constituents and rural communities, all the while continuing his family's long line of public service and dedication to the State of Oklahoma. I commend him for his service and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Remarks at a State Dinner Honoring Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany With the Presidential Medal of Freedom

June 7, 2011

The President. Good evening. *Guten Abend.* Michelle and I are honored to welcome you as we host Chancellor Merkel, Professor Sauer, and the German delegation for the first official visit and state dinner for a European leader during my Presidency.

Angela, you and the German people have always shown me such warmth during my visits to Germany. I think of your gracious hospitality in Dresden. I think back to when I was a candidate and had that small rally in Berlin's Tiergarten. [*Laughter*] So we thought we'd reciprocate with a little dinner in our Rose Garden.

Now, it's customary at these dinners to celebrate the values that bind nations. Tonight we wanted to do something different. We wanted to pay tribute to an extraordinary leader who embodies these values and who's inspired millions around the world, including me, and that's my friend Chancellor Merkel.

More than five decades ago, in 1957, the first German Chancellor ever to address our Congress, Konrad Adenauer, spoke of his people's "will of freedom" and of the millions of his countrymen forced to live behind an Iron Curtain. And one of those millions, in a small East German town, was a young girl named Angela.

She remembers when the wall went up and how everyone in her church was crying. Told by the Communists that she couldn't pursue her love of languages, she excelled as a physicist. Asked to spy for the secret police, she refused. And the night the wall came down, she

crossed over, like so many others, and finally experienced what she calls the "incredible gift of freedom."

Tonight we honor Angela Merkel not for being denied her freedom or even for attaining her freedom, but for what she achieved when she gained her freedom. Determined to finally have her say, she entered politics, rising to become the first East German to lead a united Germany, the first woman Chancellor in German history, and an eloquent voice for human rights and dignity around the world.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the highest honor a President can bestow on a civilian. Most honorees are Americans; only a few others have received it, among them Pope John Paul II, Nelson Mandela, and Helmut Kohl. So please join me in welcoming Chancellor Merkel for the presentation of the next Medal of Freedom.

[*At this point, Maj. Reginald McClam, USMC, Marine Corps Aide to the President, read the citation, and the President presented the medal.*]

The President. You can all applaud. [*Laughter*]

[*Chancellor Merkel moved to the podium, but the President then returned to the podium and continued his remarks as follows.*]

I've got to do the toast. [*Laughter*] I want to conclude by inviting all of you to stand and join

me in a toast. And I want to do so with the words that Angela spoke 2 years ago when she became the first German leader to address our Congress since Chancellor Adenauer all those decades ago.

Her words spoke not only to the dreams of that young girl in the East, but to the dreams of all who still yearn for their rights and dignity today: To freedom, which “must be struggled for, and then defended anew, every day of our lives.”

Cheers. *Zum Wohl.*

[Chancellor Merkel then gave brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:31 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Joachim Sauer, husband of Chancellor Merkel; former President Nelson R. Mandela of South Africa; and former Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chancellor Merkel.

Remarks at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, Virginia June 8, 2011

Thank you so much, everybody. It is great to be back at NOVA. I come here often enough that I think I should be getting some credits. [Laughter] Plus I've got an in with Dr. Biden, and her husband owes me big time, so—[laughter].

It is wonderful to see everybody here. We've got some special guests. Our outstanding Labor Secretary, Hilda Solis, is here. Where's Hilda? Congressman Jim Moran is here, putting on his jacket. The mayor of Alexandria, Bill Euille, is here. The president of Northern Virginia Community College, Dr. Robert Temple, is here.

I just had a chance to see the labs where students are training for jobs working on advanced vehicles, led by a teacher who's here, Ernie Packer, who spent almost three decades at Ford Motor Company. Where's Ernie? Did we get him back here? There he is.

That's why my sleeves are rolled up. I was getting under the hood. [Laughter] You guys want me to work on your car—don't do it. [Laughter]

But I was so impressed not only with the skills that the young people were learning, but also with the enthusiasm and excitement of what they see as a potential future. All across America, there are students like the ones that I've met here at NOVA, folks who are gaining skills, they're learning a trade, they're working hard and putting in the hours to move up the profession that they've chosen or to take a chance on a new line of work. Among the stu-

dents I was meeting here, we saw some—looked like 18-, 19-year-olds, but we also saw a couple of folks who were midcareer or even had retired and now were looking to go back to work.

So these are men and women like David Korlitz. David started at a car dealership as an apprentice. And he'll tell you, he was at the low end of the totem pole. Then he entered GM—the GM automotive program here at NOVA, started picking up new skills, led to better and more challenging work. He began to prove himself as a technician. And after he graduated, he kept moving up. So now David is hoping to work hard enough to earn a management position at the dealership where he was an apprentice just a few years ago.

And I want to quote David, because I think it captures what happens here at a place like NOVA. David said, whatever he ends up doing, the automotive training program here was “the spark [he] needed to get [his] career started.” The spark he needed to get his career started.

Lighting a spark. That's what community colleges can do. That's what learning a new skill or training in a new field can do. And that's the reason that I'm here today. We've got to light more sparks all across America, and that's going to make a difference in the futures of individuals who are looking for a better life, but it's also going to make a difference in America's future. So I've set a goal that by the end of this decade, we are going to once again lead the world in